

Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaengliae*)



Humpback whales are 50 feet (15.2 meters) long--about as long as a school bus. Humpback whales are mostly black or gray (although they sometimes appear brown) with the undersides of their flukes, flippers and bellies white. They have two blowholes, a small dorsal fin, and long flippers. Humpback whales are extremely active and do lots of flipper and fluke slapping and tend to breach more than any other baleen whale species.

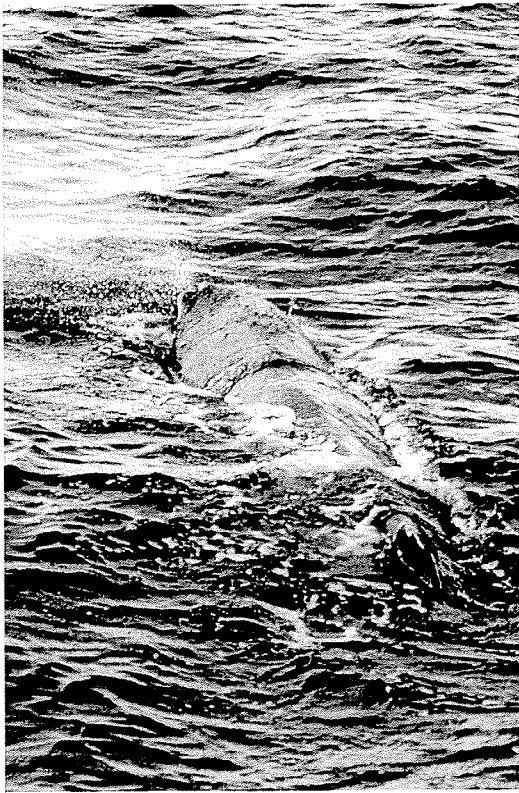
It is thought that baleen whales (including humpback whales) have excellent hearing, especially at low frequencies, which is valuable in the dark ocean environment where vision is less useful. Humpbacks are baleen whales, which means they filter their food through baleen plates. They consume krill, anchovies, cod, sardines, mackerel, capelin, and other sorts of schooling fish. Some humpbacks have a very unusual way of catching their food. They make nets to catch their prey called "bubble nets" with the air that they release from their blowholes. The whales dive deep then swim up in a spiral pattern, all the while releasing a steady stream of bubbles. As the bubbles rise they form a bubble cage, which traps the fish or plankton that the whales are pursuing. Then the whales swim up through the center of the bubble cage with their jaws open and capture a great gulp of food.

Humpback whales are probably old enough to mate at about 7 years of age. Females are pregnant for about 11 to 12 months and get pregnant approximately every two to four years. Calves are born able to swim and can grow 1.5 feet (0.5 meters) per month while nursing. Females nurse their newborn calves in warm, shallow water. Humpbacks have very complicated courtship behaviors and many male humpbacks can surround a female and compete with each other to get close to the female. Sometimes the competition involves males lunging at and bashing into each other. At the end of the mating and calving season, humpback whales migrate to cold, productive waters to feed.

Humpback whales typically appear in the Santa Barbara Channel by late May to June and stay until August or September, or even as late as November.

(source: NOAA Fisheries & CDFG websites)

Sperm Whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*)



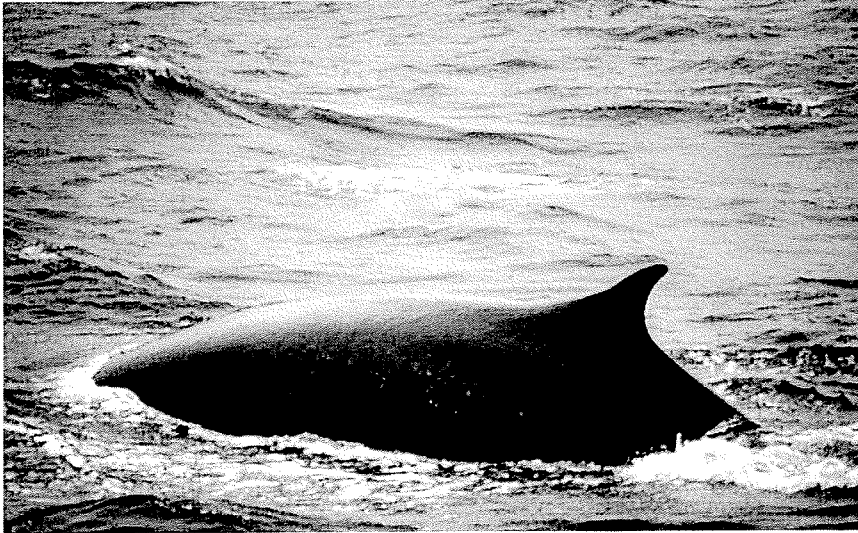
Male sperm whales grow to about 60 feet (18.3 meters) while female sperm whales grow to approximately 43 feet (13.1 meters) long. Male and female sperm whales have huge, squarish foreheads, small inconspicuous eyes, and a long narrow lower jaw. Sperm whales have one blowhole located at the left of the forehead. Their blows are projected forward at an angle, which is very different from other whales. Their light-brown to blue-gray skin is rippled over much of the body, especially on the back and sides.

Sperm whales are among the deepest marine mammal divers. Males have been known to dive 3,936 feet (1199.7 meters) while females dive to at least 3,280 feet (999.7 meters). Sperm whales can dive for over an hour.

Sperm whales are present in California offshore waters year round (Dohl et al. 1983, Barlow 1995, Forney et al. 1995) reaching peak abundance from April through mid-June and from the end of August through mid-November (Rice 1974). Sperm whales are also known to occur inshore along submarine canyons, but typically prefer deepwater zones where they feed on giant squid, octopus, shrimp, crab and small bottom sharks (Drumm 2000). Surveys conducted in 1993 and 1996 by Barlow and Taylor (2001) estimated 1,407 sperm whales off the coast of California, Oregon and Washington. Sperm whales are not likely to be found in the project vicinity as they inhabit offshore deep-sea habitats.

(sources: NOAA Fisheries website & CDFG website)

Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*)



The fin whale is sleek and fast and has grooves on the throat and belly. The brown-black of the back fades on the sides of the body to pure white on the belly. The upper jaw is completely brown but the lower jaw is black on the left and white on the right. In the mouth there are 350 to 450 baleen plates on each side of the upper jaw. Baleen is unique to these types of whales, and serves as a strainer to capture food. The dorsal fin is set well toward the rear of the body, and its prominence gives the whale its name.



The fin whale can attain a length of up to 80 ft (24.4 meters) and a weight up to 50 tons. The fin whale is thought to be monogamous, and is generally only seen in small groups. It migrates to colder waters in the summer to feed on the abundant krill and fishes there, and then returns in winter to warmer waters in order to reproduce. It can swim at speeds of more than 23 mph and can stay submerged under normal circumstances for about 30 minutes.

Fin whales migrate from the summer feeding grounds in the Gulf of Alaska to winter calving grounds in the Gulf of California. Fin whales are fairly common year-round in southern and central California (Dohl et al. 1983, Forney et al. 1995) with peak numbers in summer and fall. Barlow and Taylor (2001) estimated 1,851 fin whales off the coasts of California, Oregon and Washington. Fin whales feed on invertebrates and small schooling fish (Wynne and Folkens 1992).

(sources: NOAA NMML & Fisheries website, AmericanZoo website & CDFG website)